

Hokah hires new city clerk

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It was a long and sometimes contentious process, but the city of Hokah has finally filled its vacant city clerk position.

At the city council's monthly meeting April 7, the councilors voted unanimously to hire Cassandra Hanan to replace long-time clerk Doug Moen, who retired several months ago. In the meantime, city staff has been pitching in to take care of clerk duties such as payroll and bills payable – jobs they found strenuous but were able to complete in the interim.

Hanan, a Town of Campbell, Wis., resident who also works part-time as the assistant clerk/treasurer for that municipality, will work 15 to 20 hours a week in the Hokah administrative office on a yet-to-be determined schedule, as details need to be worked out with the Town of Campbell. Her starting wage is \$16 an hour.

The city went through the steps of collecting applications and interviewing select candidates. Those on the interviewing committee, including councilors Don Bissen and Judy Lonkoski, felt Hanan was by far the strongest candidate and brought the greatest depth of experience to the position.

"We went by the educational background of the lady we picked," Lonkoski said. "Her presentation was awesome, and myself, I thought she was the best qualified for this job."

She added that when questioned about possibly taking on city administrator duties when current administrator Rod Blank retires in August, Hanan indicated an interest.

"She's very qualified as far as administration goes," Lonkoski said, adding that there was some accounting experience Hanan was lacking. "You hate to lose somebody of this caliber."

Bissen said Hanan was as qualified, education-wise, as any of the candidates and had a good attitude.

"She feels tied to the community," he said. "She's not that far away."

Lonkoski said Hanan would be hired to perform clerk duties first, then may be considered when Blank retires to take on his position, as well. If that arrangement doesn't work, she could take Blank's job and then another part-time clerk could be hired.

Blank, though, reiterated a point he'd made at previous meetings that he feels asking one full-time person to do both the clerk and administrator jobs "would be pretty tough." That, and it would add to the city's expense by requiring benefits for that person, whereas none are offered to part-timers. But, he conceded, "That is your decision, not mine; you are the governing body and you make those decisions."

Councilor Rebecca Albrecht said she appreciated the unanimous choice, but said she hesitates hiring a person without an accounting background for a job that requires a lot of

accounting.

“That concerns me,” she said.

Blank said Hanan does perform some accounting, including the collection of taxes, but does not do payroll or utility accounting.

“I would not hesitate to hire her, but you are hiring a financial office accounting person,” he said. “She has a four-year business administration degree, which I’m sure has some accounting to it. But I wouldn’t be looking at this person necessarily to take my spot, as well.”

Bissen said she’s not being hired for Blank’s job, but that the council is trying to “look down the road if it could be a possibility.”

Hanan will begin immediately.

In other news

~ Recreation board member Samantha Mullen brought forward a request from La Crescent’s Lunch Wagon program to expand into Hokah this summer. Members of La Crescent United Methodist Church last year provided sack lunches free of charge to children in La Crescent each Wednesday from three locations in that city, and this year, they’re looking to move into Hokah and Dakota.

Mullen suggested to the group that they set up at the city park on their chosen day, since youth t-ball and craft programs will be dismissing around the lunch hour this summer. She also mentioned that if they bring their service to Hokah, she will attempt to secure a donation from the Hokah Lions Club to help defray their costs. The council gave its consent.

~ The council gave its blessing for the local 4-H Club to continue its plan for a parade to coincide with the Hokah Fall Fest in September, similar to one Nodine organized for the Fourth of July. According to police chief Bob Schuldt, the club is considering Friday evening or Saturday afternoon, and the route would begin on the edge of town and track along city streets, but not the state highway through downtown. A social would follow at the end of the parade at the city park.

~ Schuldt asked to remind homeowners that pet license renewals are due this month.